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HELPS TO
PROFITABLE
PAPER SELLING



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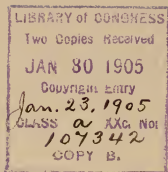
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Helps to Profitable Paper Selling

Helpful hints, original observations,
and salient suggestions, as to where,
when, and how to sell PAPER.

CHICAGO
THE PAPER TRADE
1904



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FOREWORD.

This book is intended to be helpful to such persons as are considering starting in the jobbing paper business.

It is assumed that the essentials of experience, capital and force of character are possessed by the prospective dealer.

Force of character, "backbone," is today needed in greater ratio than perhaps the other two necessary factors.

Business methods have radically changed during the past twenty-five years. Yet the old fashioned qualities of honesty, industry and prudence are still as fundamental for making any permanent success.

Shorter credits in buying, smaller margins in selling, keener business competition and more critical customers all tend to make the business extremely strenuous.

In offset to this is the immensely enlarged field, the steady evolution in paper uses from

luxuries to necessities of life, and the more profitable appreciation of the dealer who does things extremely well or different from the average way.

Big capital has not preëmpted the jobbing business, even in the larger cities, despite the pessimistic words of some writers, while throughout the great and wealthy nation there are hundreds of prosperous communities where the right man can start as a paper dealer in the right way and gradually but surely build up a snug and safe business, profitable alike to the town and himself. Honest men with fair ability, a willingness to work and a little capital are wanted everywhere. The glad hand is reaching out for them as never before in the world's history.

There is no real secret of success besides the old, old story of persistent, intelligent effort.

This little work is not intended as a text book. The chapters deal in a common sense way with the problems of actual experience as they arise today under new modern conditions.

It is not for kindergarten use. The points

made are but suggestions for intelligent readers.

In what is written some may find much that is old, yet this very reiteration of old truths will emphasize the importance of the basic principles of systematic business.

The get-rich-quick concerns and their victims ignore these foundation stones of mercantile life and always with consequent sorrow to the latter. If you are willing to profit by the experience of one who paid dearly for his knowledge these words may serve to make the selling of paper for you both pleasurable and profitable.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. STARTING IN THE PAPER BUSINESS	9
II. BUYING THE STOCK	16
III. ARRANGING A STORE AND OFFICE	22
IV. SYSTEM ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL .	27
V. KEEPING ACCOUNTS STRAIGHT .	32
VI. ADVERTISING AN INVESTMENT, NOT AN EXPENSE	36
VII. CREDITS AND COLLECTIONS . .	41
VIII. HANDLING HELP	46
IX. EDUCATING AND HANDLING CUS- TOMERS	50
X. HOW TO TREAT COMPETITORS .	55
XI. KICKERS AND HOW TO CURE THEM	60
XII. LETTER WRITING A PROFITABLE PRIVILEGE	63
XIII. VALUE OF TWO PER CENT.—PAY AS YOU GO	68
XIV. GETTING IN A RUT	71
XV. SELLING FOR CASH	75
XVI. LOSING YOUR GRIP	78
XVII. SPREADING OUT	82
XVIII. EXECUTIVE ABILITY REQUIRED .	86
XIX. AN AIM IN LIFE	90
XX. STRICTLY PRIVATE	94
XXI. PATIENCE, PROGRESS AND PROS- PERITY	99

HELPS TO PROFITABLE PAPER SELLING.

CHAPTER I.

STARTING IN THE PAPER BUSINESS.

If you have decided to embark in the jobbing paper trade it is assumed that technical experience, enthusiasm and a fair cash capital are parts of your equipment.

The amount of necessary capital depends so largely upon circumstances that advice here would not be valuable except to say that even a modest business should rarely be started without \$4,000 to \$5,000 as a minimum.

It should be noted that short credits are now the rule among mill men and the new customer who does not take his discounts is likely to stand less favorably with them than the cash buyer, other points being equal.

Probably one-third of all mercantile failures in the United States are caused directly by lack of capital; insufficient in starting, insufficient to carry the business until sales money can be collected, insufficient to satisfy the sheriff should he call. At least 15 to 20 per cent of the proposed investment should be retained in bank as working capital.

The question of partnership will always be a mooted one.

If a man has confidence in his own energy, industry and a fair ability for both financiering and selling goods, the best experience of those in the trade favors "going it alone." Later he can take in a partner, and to far better advantage when he has established a trade and good will.

Business partnerships are much like domestic ones, and should not be entered into any more lightly. It is frequently better to give a good bookkeeper and office man a working interest than to chance the waste of time, loss of temper and the friction involved by unsatisfactory partnerships. These are days when most successful results are obtained by the "one man power" idea.

The small jobber in a small city and with

a somewhat narrow field will find that a considerable part of his trade will be really of a retail character, especially if his stock is selected as suggested in the subsequent chapter. This fact will prove, however, an advantage to the beginner, if he handles such customers with tact and courtesy.

There are instances within the knowledge of the writer where a stock of goods was actually bought and held pending the selection of a business location. In this case the result was favorable, yet as a rule the choice of a town is the first thing to think of after settling the financial question.

Traveling salesmen who cover the whole country for kindred lines, such as printing machinery, frequently have knowledge of desirable locations for a paper house. Trade journals generally keep in touch with matters of this kind. THE PAPER TRADE of Chicago would probably be glad to give any information in their possession helpful to seekers after a good town in which to establish a store.

The traveling paper salesman himself is one who most naturally expects to embark in business on his own account. Frequently he does so, sometimes failing to win success chiefly

from lack of gauging aright the importance of the office end of the business. He can sell the goods, but——

The man and his methods are therefore more important than the best location or large capital. A systematic, industrious man with a sane, sunny temperament, will win out almost anywhere. The cheerful man has a creative power unknown to the pessimist.

Such an one attracts success and is a compelling force, hypnotizing all whom he meets.

Personal acquaintance and popularity are valuable assets and may well be utilized if conditions favor starting in your own city. If this be a large one, however, and your capital modest, then a smaller town will present more advantages, even to a stranger, owing to less severe competition and lighter running expenses.

Recent statistics prove that the south is now relatively more prosperous than any other section of the Union, but it is as yet too sparsely settled, has too few trade centers or a sufficient number of reading people to make it attractive for a paper man, whatever great opportunities it may hold for other lines of business. The marvelous advance in wealth and culture

made by the middle west states has brought a greater demand for all kinds of paper. With leisure and wealth comes a desire to read; people find new wants. This affects the demand even for wrapping papers. More things are wanted. More articles are now wrapped in paper tenfold than was the case fifteen years ago. The retired farmer, now so much in evidence, from Ohio to Kansas and Nebraska, has become, with his family, a large buying factor in the paper line.

We read so much about the growth of the west that we sometimes overlook the dense population and inherited wealth conditions of the eastern states. True, paper houses are also plentiful there, yet some of them are so conservative by environment as to make the field inviting for live men who can create and hold trade.

One of the best informed men in the paper business recently said that he thought Washington and Oregon presented especially good opportunities. He had formed this opinion by personal investigation and because of a belief in the growth of Alaska and the future of the Orient trade, which must tend to the steady prosperity of our whole Pacific coast.

The question, then, of a good location becomes an interesting problem for individual solution. Few persons would chose a city declining in population, or even one at a standstill.

The town being selected, the location in the place is important. As the trade has to be sought under any conditions, a store on a main street is not essential. Good light, ventilation and abundant room are necessities. Frequently a lot owner can be found willing to put up a modest building for a good tenant on a long lease. A modern one or two story structure could thus be had at low rent, and built in a way to economize handling stock. Such a building would bring plenty of free advertising if the local press was handled right. A corner might be secured with all the advantages for advertising the business and shipping goods. If you are locating in a new town, study well the place and people. Keep your own counsel as to finances and plans. Cultivate modesty of manner and statement. Let your friends advertise your greatness. Be loyal to the town. Know the local newspaper men from the start, yet don't talk too much to them. At this juncture,

especially, give your own business the preference. Ride your hobbies away from the office, for you have need now of your best undivided attention in getting well started in the paper trade.

CHAPTER II.

BUYING THE STOCK.

The words of this book are not likely to interest the heavy capitalist, but may be helpful to the man with a few thousands who must make his dollars go a long ways.

In freshening up his own knowledge of paper buying, the writer has talked with scores of paper men, manufacturers, jobbers, salesmen, bookers, retailers and others of life-long experience. Some of them dwelt upon the reasons for their success, a few talked of their failures, but none of them laid stress upon the importance of right buying. Not one quoted the old saw, "Goods well bought are half sold."

The fact is, buying to-day is more easily done than it was fifteen years ago, when larger stocks were carried and when a large part of the buying was done during two months of the year. The live jobber now reads the trade

papers and visits the mills. He studies the conditions of the manufacturing and distributing markets. The dealer is not obliged to go to headquarters to buy; although he would consult his own interests if he did so more frequently. The salesmen come to your office, and it is here that some of the buyer's talent is needed. A good buyer must be somewhat of a judge of human nature, as well as of paper, for the travelers include many different kinds of men. As a rule, they are bright, honest fellows, fertile in ideas, who will use any fair means to sell you a carload of paper, but occasionally you will strike some one who will stoop to anything to make a sale. It is a good business to encourage these traveling salesmen, whether you are in the market or not. They are an observing lot and the chances are nine to ten that you can learn something from each one of them.

The writer asked one veteran paper maker how much paper a man with \$5,000 cash could buy, and he answered \$15,000 worth. Putting the question personally, he added that if he had that amount to start with he would buy \$1,000 for cash, \$2,500 on credit and hold the balance for bargains, working expenses and

contingencies. He was of the opinion that the present offered as great, if not greater opportunities for the industrious man to go into business than ever before.

With a moderate capital, a man would do well to buy at first chiefly coarse papers, wrapping, strawboard, bags, toilet paper, twine, etc., and locate in a town of say 20,000 people. From this center he could also gradually cover a radius of about twenty miles.

In this way his small capital would go much further, a trade with dealers in every line could be built up, even though the sales were individually small. To wrapping papers he might add wooden ware, such as pie plates, skewers, toothpicks and specialties in paper, like oyster and ice cream pails, also wooden spoons, towel rollers, rolling pins, chopping bowls, bread boards and a host of small articles of this kind.

If wise, he should not attempt at first to keep flat papers or ruled stock for printers' use, as being a distinct branch of the trade and one that would not justify him in tying up his capital. He might put in a little low-price flat stock paper retailing at about eight cents a pound, and some envelopes that would sell

to others besides printers, and by supplying temporary wants of the latter gradually work up a trade in the finer papers, if conditions tended to that end.

Some years ago a big Chicago house failed. An excellent bookkeeper in their employ found himself with shattered health and without money enough to buy a new hat. He managed to get transportation to Denver, where he vainly sought employment. Finally he secured a trifling consignment of wrapping papers, leased a 7 x 9 wareroom, sold the goods, delivered them first from his back, soon from a push cart. Inside of a year he was making more than a living, owned a good delivery wagon, and in four years had built up an immense trade, necessitating five teams and all else in proportion. A dozen true stories of like character came to the writer in his search for practical points. All who started modestly with coarse papers as a basis, and who were industrious and good managers, had won out.

Seemingly the jobber should buy direct of the mills or their selling agents, but here again the merchant must judge for himself. An acquaintance with mill owners and a close knowledge of how their product is marketed would

suggest at least a visit to manufacturing centers. The tendency, however, of most mills is to discourage the new small jobber and to refer him to the larger jobber, who will usually sell him as close, if not closer, than the mill man. Sales are being daily made in which one jobber sells to another on margins of 2 and 3 per cent advance. In such cases, of course the big jobber never sees or handles the paper.

The writer has known an instance within the past eighteen months where a small jobbing house has started, buying nothing from first hands and yet has made good money. In this case competitors who bought direct could not touch some round orders owing to their goods really costing them more.

More liberal credit and other favors can frequently be had of the big jobbing house.

Briefly summed up, the buyer with wide knowledge of stock, mills and men ought to save money by buying direct, and no time spent in an endeavor to reach this result will be wasted. The buyer without these advantages, might at first get most of his stock and buying experience of the big dealers in the larger cities.

He can make a fair profit under either method. To sell and immediately deliver a few bundles of paper to the grocer, butcher, druggist or tailor will not be found difficult. The convenience of it and the fact of keeping the money in the home town will all tend to steadily build up a trade if the place and man are both right.

In the buying end of the business, knowledge is power and no man can afford to neglect any means for adding to his knowledge of prices and market conditions.

CHAPTER III.

ARRANGING STORE AND OFFICE.

It has been elsewhere suggested that a low rent might be obtained by getting a lot owner to build a store for you on property a block or more away from the main business street.

The prudent man, however, may not care to tie himself up with a long lease, for long leases in a small city are not always negotiable. Occasionally an occupied store can be secured by offering the tenant a small bonus for vacating. Such a cash proposition is often very tempting to small dealers.

Even if you are a trifle away from the chief street and not catering to retail trade, it will pay you to have a good show window kept bright and clean and well dressed. It is cheap advertising, creating an appearance of prosperity always helpful.

Insist upon clean, bright paint on the whole building, whether you use it all or not. If the

store is vacant the owner will not stand on this expense for a good tenant. Have plenty of signs, and original in style. Get them, if you have to buy them away from the town.

They need not be expensive, indeed something that will catch the eye and look well for a year or two is all that is needful. Strangers will often judge you by your signs as they do by your clothes.

The observing man of affairs needs few hints as to how to best display stock. Make a good front of what you have and see that it never is allowed to look ragged. Paper specialties and small wooden ware can be made to show up boldly on a small investment. Not much shelving will be needed. Pile up paper on the original cases. Use the hollow square idea as much as possible. With a little skill and plenty of work you can make a big show for little money.

Have your office a few feet back from the front windows, occupying about half the width of the store. Don't be afraid to use space for this. It will have good effect when the business is new. See that your bookkeeper has good light. Arrange a little privacy for him when occasion requires, but fix it so that

both he and you are usually accessible to everyone. This is especially desirable in a small city where you are selling chiefly coarse papers, and dealing with numerous people, provincial in their ideas. They will not forgive you if they think you are "stuck up." Keep office near to the door and have two glad hands ready to shoot out, not effusively, but naturally when shy customers come in. If you can't wait on them yourself, introduce them to a clerk, if unknown, and tell him audibly to treat the customer right. These ideas may seem rather commonplace, but remember that this refers chiefly to people whom you can readily size up as liking such attention. In this front office no private room is desirable. It might savor too much of "style" to suit most of your probable customers. Instead of a private office there, it would be well to have a desk for yourself screened or partitioned off in the rear of the store, if light is good. Such a place is necessary if you would do hard work and keep undisturbed. It would also give you an office in which to talk confidential matters over with your customers. The front office could be made neatly attractive while the rear one should at least be cheer-

fully fitted up, or perhaps a trifle elaborately from the view-point of a first-class advertisement.

In a small stock of coarse papers a simple stock book is all that is needed. When the business grows larger a tag showing exact quantity in each pile is desirable.

Let this stock book, however, be daily revised and left each night upon your desk so that you can verify the count. Be prepared for dishonesty in your employees, and guard against it carefully, but unostentatiously. Your desk near the shipping room may remove temptation to pilfer. Two keys to the store will be found quite enough.

Some goods will need to carry a cost mark. Here is a good cipher; one easily remembered and not in general use:

U-S-E-C-H-A-R-I-T-Y

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-0

A delivery wagon will be almost a necessity from the outset and should be made a traveling advertisement. It need not be an expensive rig, nor a large one, but it should outshine in brightness anything on wheels in town. Nothing catches the eye quicker than

a circus wagon, and you could profitably use a subdued circus wagon. If you can buy a docile jackass in place of a horse, so much the better. Get a bright young man as a driver and have him call daily and regularly upon every possible paper buyer in the town. This systematic work, if done in a pleasant way, will eventually bring trade, for it will prove irresistible. Some buyers feel flattered when rightly sought, others a sort of moral obligation to reward kindly persistency. In the office proper some of the chief labor-saving devices should be installed. No need to run into much money at first, but loose leaf ledgers, card indices and vertical filing cases are savers of money, time and temper. A modern typewriting machine, run by the sweet-voiced young woman who answers the telephone and assists the bookkeeper, might complete the office equipment.

CHAPTER IV.

SYSTEM ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”

So runs Holy Writ, and no less true is the business gospel of 1904 that a man may speak with the salesman's most silvery tongue, possess many golden eagles, have rich financial acumen and generous opportunities, yet without system in his affairs he will become a “busted community” in these days of strenuous competition.

This seems like putting it rather strong, but your own observation will prove the truth of the assertion.

No man need hope for success unless he or somebody associated with him applies system to every department of the business.

Time was when it was not so essential as

to-day. Now it is the breath of mercantile life.

Unless a man has really studied this question of having a time and place for everything he can form no estimate of the value of following a rule of this kind.

To some, order and system are inbred, and in extreme cases men become slaves to system. Such persons are not best fitted to conduct large affairs.

Good salesmen as a rule are not extremely systematic, but as they are usually keen observers of men and conditions they know the value of business system, and when they become proprietors insist upon its use in their own establishments.

Ownership of a business frequently remakes a man. He is stimulated to do many things previously without serious interest to him, and to do them better than he has seen them done before. His ambition nerves him with a keener sense of business proprieties than he had known as an employe.

An excellent rule to establish is to be at your place of business early and absolutely on time. A half hour of undisturbed work in the morning is worth more than an hour and

a half later in the day. In the smaller cities 7:30 a. m. in summer and 8 a. m. in winter is none too early. An hour at noon is sufficient absence, while work after 6 p. m. is usually unnecessary. Like Sunday work it is a habit well to avoid, and careful planning will generally tend to eliminate both from business pursuits the hours which ought to be sacred to the family or your own mental and physical betterment. The writer remembers when, as a young man, he was placed in charge of a large office and assumed work and duties double in quantity over his former bank position, that for a time he was almost swamped with labor. He asked advice of an old mercantile friend and got for answer only a motto, "Anticipate." In striving to live up to this watchword he soon found that by planning systematically his work, anticipating the morrow's labor and relegating most details to subordinates he gained more leisure and a poise of mind impossible to have had without this watchword, "Anticipate," and which was only another name for system.

No set rules can here be given for establishing a business system. Much depends upon the man's capital and the extent of the business.

First of all, however, the owner should mark out a job for himself and make that position quite as definite as that of any of the other men. It would be well to fix a salary for yourself as modest as is consistent with decent living and live within it. If you are married and have the right kind of a wife she will approve of this system of finance while the business is new and unproven. If you elect to start without a partner, then a clear, level-headed man should be hired as bookkeeper and credit man. He should be old enough to be stable and if enterprising and with live ideas, the number of his years is not so important. The craze for young men is waning a little and for office work and handling credits experience is most needful. Then, too, the methodical older man is not so apt to embark in business for himself as are the juniors. Pay him a good salary, since there need be no other high-salaried people employed in a new business. Those that are hired must be imbued with the spirit of system, loyalty and industry. Better far to put on a green man or boy, one susceptible to instruction, obedient to orders and of strictest integrity than to engage help with larger experience in your line. As for

yourself, if you have systematic theories and practices so much the better, but having employed systematic machines keep happy, even though you lack personal system, since you doubtless can create trade, something equally necessary.

CHAPTER V.

KEEPING ACCOUNTS STRAIGHT.

Every office man has special theories about the simplest and most accurate way of running his accounts.

The trade papers have led to an exchange of ideas and to a perfection of account keeping that enables great industries to run their offices like clock work. With one or two men of expert knowledge and executive ability and an army of low-priced machine-like mortals, transactions representing millions of money are quickly handled and summarized for the use of department heads.

From the office standpoint, system has reduced errors to a minimum and made it possible by use of consecutive numbers, indices, etc., to quickly trace the full details of a customer's business.

There is still much looseness in many offices about delivery tickets. These should be made

out in triplicate for local city business; one for the shipping clerk, one for the purchaser and one to be signed by the proper clerk at the buyer's office. Teamsters should be instructed to get full signatures. If the buyer or his agent are not to be found the ticket should come back and it must be some one's duty to get a signature before the delivery is forgotten by the receiver of the goods. There need be no friction about this and the bookkeeper can usually adjust disputed matters by 'phone. These signed delivery tickets should be promptly turned into the main office and kept for a time in the vault or safe. Only by some such method can disputed accounts be avoided. Merchants are apt to think that a prompt mailing or delivery of an invoice makes such care of delivery tickets unnecessary, but the moral effect on thoughtless help is good, even if experience had not proven the necessity for such care. Whenever a bill of any size has been delivered it would be an excellent plan for the dealer to drop in on the customer and ask how the goods pleased him. Little attentions of this kind inspire confidence and cement friendships.

Monthly statements should invariably be

sent promptly. It would be well to cultivate the plan of always mailing them on the last day of each month, then the patron will receive yours alone and not among a batch of others along about the 2nd to the 5th of the month. The usual plan is to omit the nature of the business on printed statement of account. Be different and put it on. It costs nothing and has a chance of advertising you. Make a point of having your established cash discounts show conspicuously on both invoices and statements. Some merchants add this with a rubber stamp impression, thinking that the patron will believe himself especially favored. This practice might in some cases lead the buyer to think that his credit was questioned.

Standard discounts should be well adhered to. If you give two per cent off in ten days it might not be policy to quibble over a day or two's lateness of remittance. If more than that a polite letter should be sent stating that in that special case it would be allowed but in future you would be obliged to decline to make the concession. No good business man could take exception to this but would be apt to admire your carefulness.

If your business is in its infancy you may imagine that you can keep your own books and save the immediate expense of a bookkeeper. This argument is a poor one, for unless you are a trained office man, you will waste time and lose the vigor you need for managing the business, besides this nine men out of ten who attempt to keep their own books neglect to post them promptly. If every minute of your time cannot be put to more profitable effort than bookkeeping, you ought not to be in business for yourself. Briefly, you cannot afford to even try it, and bookkeeping is far too important a feature of your establishment to be a side duty of the proprietor. Franklin once said, "If you want a thing done, do it yourself." He was right then. To-day even the lesser captains of industry tell us that if you want things done find the right man to do them.

Your accounts will be kept straight if you hire the right man to manage them while your whole personal effort is devoted to managing the general business.

CHAPTER VI.

ADVERTISING AN INVESTMENT, NOT AN EXPENSE.

Advertising is but salesmanship multiplied, and a business which is not worth advertising is not worth running.

The live business man of to-day needs no argument in proof of the value of advertising.

Speaking broadly, paper men are not good advertisers. With few exceptions they cling too closely to precedents. There is no mystery in ad. writing, and much nonsense is daily written about the difficulty of preparing advertising.

The average man is indolent and an apparent lack of time causes him to neglect a seemingly difficult duty.

Like all else in connection with modern business it should be done systematically and after careful consideration of his own special conditions.

The paper man should at the outset ap-

propriate at least \$250 for this purpose the first year independent of the expense for office stationery. As his business increases it would be well to devote from three to five per cent of his gross sales in paying for direct publicity. Having formulated his plans he should buy advertising space, issue regular booklets or cards, or adopt any other method of advertising with the same care and thought as he gives to buying his stock in trade.

If he desires to cover a certain territory, say two or three counties, he can select several good daily or weekly newspapers and use in them all a small, effective card. This must be unique and forceful, inserted continuously in the weeklies and, say tri-weekly in the dailies. If possible adopt some trade mark or *fac-simile* of your signature and use this on everything, not only in newspaper advertising but on your envelopes, letter-heads, bill-heads, order blanks and, in fact, on every piece of printed matter which leaves your office. A solid black cut with white lettering, two inches deep and a column wide, if persistently used in newspaper work will burn your name into the memory of the readers as nothing else could do.

You can get very low prices for inserting an electro of this kind on a yearly contract with the local papers if you handle them right. This ad. is simply to keep your name before the people and should be supplemented by reading notices in these same papers about every two weeks. These news items, for they could be worded to appear as such, should speak of special goods which you are running or treat of improvements at your store. They might touch upon your increased business. Almost anything which carries the idea that you are up-to-date in your methods will be good advertising.

Get a list of all possible buyers in your section using telephone directories and rural delivery lists for this purpose, and keep it revised. To this list send something once a month. It need not be much, but it should be attractive and sent continuously. A large private mailing card can be made most effective, and they will be read if you have any story to tell and put it in true, simple language. Remember that small words are the strongest ones. They are easily understood and make deepest impression. Kill the big words and substitute little ones and it will be time well spent.

Don't make the mistake of getting cheap printing, for it is rank extravagance in the end. If your competitor does so, you can benefit by his false economy.

Of course you need not spend so much money as the drygoods or shoe people, but when you regard money spent for advertising and good printing as an investment certain to yield dividends, then your checks for these matters will be drawn as cheerfully as for rent or postage.

Presumably the paper man who reads these pages is also a reader of trade journals and familiar with the importance of this subject. No real business success is possible without printed advertising in some form.

Good advertising from another standpoint is also to have it known that you are always in your store at stated hours and ready to personally wait upon customers. It is strange but true how universal is the desire to be waited upon by the proprietor. The appearance of your stock, office, delivery wagons, and your own dress and manner all represent either good or bad advertising.

If you have no special hobby you need one as a healthy diversion, and this subject of ad-

vertising is a fascinating topic if you once get interested in it.

Experience says that it is not wise to put prices before the people. Arouse curiosity, excite interest in your goods but avoid prices.

Keep your low prices, if you have any, as a clincher for some big buyer, but remember that confidential figures will not be long kept secret. Calendars and souvenirs are favorite means of advertising in the paper trade. Unless they are especially good or unique they are an expensive method of unproven merit.

Money can easily be wasted and it will pay to watch the results of your advertising. Keep a book wherein is debited every expenditure of this kind. Credit the account with any sales you can trace to it. Ask each new customer why he is buying from you. If done rightly it will prove mutually helpful. You can talk with old customers about your advertising and this human interest will make you more solid with most patrons. Advertising serves also to hold old customers while making new. Much of your advertising must necessarily prove only of indirect cumulative benefit, but its effect even as placing you among progressive dealers is worth all its costs.

CHAPTER VII.

CREDITS AND COLLECTIONS.

A new paper warehouse in a new territory will be fortunate if it can avoid getting stuck with many bad accounts during the first year.

Later the jobber will come to know personally his customers, their financial standing and habits of payment, but in the natural desire to get trade he will secure a proportion of chronically hard-up merchants whose credit is poor with the older houses. At first agency reports must be his chief guide, and these at best are far from infallible; indeed, reports from the smaller towns especially are apt to be strongly biased. It might be well to subscribe to two agencies and supplement this by salesmen's statements.

This expense could, perhaps, be saved if a determined effort was made to establish a business more nearly on a cash basis. The tendency of the times is all in that direction. The

chief cause of the financial success of department stores is because they sell for cash. Railroads insist on cash for freight and passage regardless of the customs of towns through which they run.

The head of a great jobbing paper house in a large Western city told the writer that fully 85 per cent of their accounts represented cash or thirty-day customers, and as the country becomes wealthier, more and more will the power of money be used in every field where credit was once deemed essential.

This question of selling on time as a prevalent custom in a community might well receive closer attention when looking for a location, for it will prove an important factor in the merchant's success.

In the retail trade, catering largely to women, charge accounts are encouraged as tending to larger sales and better prices. For the jobbing line the cultivation of and education in a cash system has all of the argument in its favor, especially now that margins of gross profits are so much narrower than in the past. The volume of your business may, for a time, be lessened by this policy, yet the final net results cannot fail to be more comfortable.

It is most desirable to tactfully get all the information possible from the customer seeking credit at the time of first purchase, have date of payment then and there mutually understood. See that both your ledger and his invoice and statements bear this agreed date. By being frank when asking for references or statement of financial condition, frankness in return will be fostered.

If you must sell on time get notes if possible; several small ones are far better than one large one.

A polite explanation that you have not sufficient capital to carry customers and a suggestion to the buyer that he borrow money at his bank and take advantage of the cash discounts is a simple way of curbing him if his credit is questionable.

So vitally important is this question of credits and collection, and at best, so much a matter of detail that almost any jobbing business should employ a competent man to handle them and the books. As the business grows the details can be given to women clerks; but no proprietor, busy with buying and selling goods, studying customers and trade conditions, can afford more than a supervision over

his office affairs and should have a loyal, competent man to whom might be given, after proving his fitness, a small working interest in the business. Such a man will adopt a system for collections that should be free from the complex details desirable in a larger business. While the enterprise is young an office man can sometimes act as a house salesman and if progressive will be glad to familiarize himself with grades and prices.

Few men of ambition to found and push a paper business will have a liking for office details, but the proprietor should give several hours a week to keeping in touch with this matter of credits and collections. No letters of a dunning character should go out without his general supervision. Polite reminders of over-due accounts can be better framed by the salesman's instinct than if left solely to the credit man, whose point of view is usually less broad. The owner should be familiar with all of the office methods and able to handle them in the event of the bookkeeper's absence.

Look over the history of the men successful in the paper trade and you will find that

their office departments have been run systematically and courteously.

Neglect here will spoil the best efforts of the best business getter the sun ever shone upon.

CHAPTER VIII.

HANDLING HELP.

Advice on this topic is plentiful. Like the use of charity, the more that is given the more is left for the distributor.

All purveyors of advice regarding help say that loyalty must be the chief quality of those who work for others. That is all right theoretically, but most of us know that in actual business life personal loyalty to an employer's interest seems less in evidence than of old.

Of course it should be otherwise and the cause may possibly be traceable to the introduction of department store methods and wages, the growth of coöperate interests, and the invasion of women into business life, all reasons for reduced compensation.

In a measure, however, the fault lies with the employers who lack human interest in their clerks, frequently only because so en-

grossed with the keen fight now so needed to win success.

Of a necessity there is a greater sense of comradeship, of equality, in a small establishment than in a larger one and this is likely to foster a feeling of loyalty. Hence, appreciation of work well done and criticism of what is not so good should be made with this fact in mind. Dispense judicious praise when deserved, more than blame when that is deserved. Enlarge upon what is especially well done, point out what should be remedied. The payment of good wages is a part of the treatment which makes men loyal, but only a part of it. Appreciation and consideration if rightly and cautiously shown will produce loyalty every time.

You can frequently consult with your older men, you can show interest in the progress or welfare of the younger ones without encouraging dictation from the former or spoiling the latter.

Consideration only means a use of the golden rule. If a mistake has been made do not blow up the culprit before the others. Take him aside and ask how it happened. It is mistaken kindness to ignore errors of any kind.

Treat the mistake seriously, yet talk courteously to the offender. This course will impress the matter upon his mind and lessen like repetitions.

Make the men believe that you are depending upon them for something and that you have faith in their integrity and word. If you can give your head man a working interest you may keep him a great deal longer than you could in any other way. Most good, first-class men have it in mind to be in business for themselves some day. If they have not such ambition they are not extra good men.

When a clerk comes to you about an offer from some one else a good square talk is mutually beneficial. Try to look at it from his standpoint and yet it is not always desirable to grant an increase of salary merely because of this better offer he may have received. If you desire very much to keep him say that he should consider the chances of future advancement equally with the question of salary. You can truthfully say that it is a bad plan for a man to change and remind him that long steady employment by one house is the best of recommendations. You might to such a man add greater responsibilities and

promise a raise in wages after a few months if he proves worthy of the place.

Keep the force always busy during working hours and encourage them to make suggestions helpful to the business. Keep their confidence and respect but don't be too talkative or confidential at any time. The man who talks about his plans to everyone in his employ soon loses their esteem.

As a rule don't employ relatives. It is sure to breed dissatisfaction.

With more ignorant employes be kind but firm. Too much courtesy here may not be understood and taken for weakness. There are rare occasions when nothing but a knock-down argument embellished in flesh and blood will curb impertinence and check insult. Have sand in reserve. Weaklings soon become "dead ones" in modern business.

An honest man with a few brains and a heart in working order need not worry over the problem of handling help.

CHAPTER IX.

EDUCATING AND HANDLING CUSTOMERS.

A great deal of your success will depend upon your ability to educate and handle customers.

If you are a salesman you probably think that you know how to handle customers and you may shy at this suggestion about educating them as impracticable.

But as a matter of fact you have been doing it right along and neither you nor your patrons may have been aware of it.

It is assumed that you possess only moderate capital and cannot afford to carry a very complete stock, hence this matter of educating customers' wants, becomes a dollar-saving proposition for you.

Promptness, courtesy, showing the glad hand moved by a genuine human interest in your customers, will make your task both easy and pleasant.

Many buyers think they know exactly what they want and these must be handled with great tact if you would sell them what you want. You can tell them that you are out of just that weight, shade or quality, but can order it from the mill and will do it with pleasure, incidentally suggesting a trial of a little of the goods you have in stock. These are points scarcely needed by the good salesman, but he may be reminded that such methods won't go with numerous patrons, unless the salesman has real sincerity of manner. A false note in such talk will easily drive away a suspicious patron.

You will soon find out about what your territory most requires and then you can gradually introduce such goods as you can buy to best advantage. The few sales for immediate delivery which you will miss are as nothing compared with the danger of tying up your capital in slow-selling stock.

You should be a good listener and give due deference to the words of an experienced, perhaps conceited, buyer among your customers, but all the same politely hold the whip handle and skillfully manage to sell him what you have by unconscious education.

The forceful man with confidence in his own technical knowledge, yet unmixed with vainness, is really a hypnotist in a business sense.

Cultivate the practice of introducing some special goods to your biggest customers first. Mankind is the same as ever. It is flattering to a buyer's judgment to think that he has obtained something entirely new, exclusive or at a bargain. Not only have your buyer think this but let it be true. Most men are imitators. There are fewer people of original minds than we think, did we but know the real facts surrounding human beings. Laziness is a common fault and most of us let others think for us. Start with good sales to the largest and most prosperous houses and the smaller fellows will fall in line like sheep after the leader.

In handling customers it is probable that the owner is wise enough to treat the smallest buyer with courtesy and respect, but he must watch his employees, especially the younger ones who frequently are afflicted with the "swell head." The telephone is the innocent means of doing great harm to some houses. It can be made to do the worst possible advertising. Did you ever have occasion to

ring up some store that you were favoring with your patronage and have some one at the other end say, quickly: "Well, what is it?" or "What do you want?" Even a plain and impatient "well," seems to grate a little. A polite reply to a "kick" over the 'phone will do a great deal of good; a blunt or impolite one will make matters worse. If it can be avoided don't let a "kid" answer the 'phone. It will be found real economy to employ a sweet-voiced girl to run the 'phone and help the bookkeeper. If you get the right kind at the start she will soon be invaluable to the credit man. Girls don't get drunk, play the races or steal your money, and as a rule, won't give away your business secrets to a competitor.

When you get a customer post up about his history. Make him a friend if he is of the right sort. Always call him by his name or title if he has one and see that this is done by your employees. If he has had a war or political record, occasionally bring him out on this or any other hobby.

Decently play upon this great weakness of most men—human vanity. Especially does this apply to the successful, self-educated mor-

tal. Carlyle says, "The self-made man is always proud of his maker."

Don't forget names and faces. This may not come natural to you, but cultivate it and it will grow. If you have seen a man but once and, perhaps, again chance to meet him on the street it is marvelous how the little courtesy of calling him by name will impress him.

Wait personally on all the customers you can who come to the store, and make yourself familiar with their peculiarities.

Educating customers is simply industrious tact, and handling them right is the pleasantest feature of a man's daily business, provided he has a kindly heart and honest motives. Without these mainsprings of action he can never really know the meaning of success in its highest sense.

CHAPTER X.

HOW TO TREAT COMPETITORS.

In no way have business methods so changed as in this matter of treating competitors. Possibly there was a period prior to the Civil war when business courtesy was the rule. After that time, with business ethics and public morals upset by the scourge of war, there came several decades during which it seemed to be a shrewd, good business policy to decry others in the same line. Newspapers especially, even the greatest and best, defamed each other in columns of abuse. That such journalism was not only tolerated but enjoyed, is only to be explained on the theory that it was the mistaken spirit of the age, as shown in the business and social history of those times.

To-day, all really broad-gauged merchants are disposed to be friendly with their com-

petitors. Only the narrow-minded, half-baked dealer at least, now traduces a competitor. Nor is the change only surface politeness. It is a philosophy brought about by better acquaintance with one another, for half the trouble in the world is due to misunderstandings of words and motives. There is room for all in this great and growing nation and with some qualifications the old adage, "Competition is the life of trade," is still true.

Occasionally competition is expensive, destructive in its methods, but ultimately when the guerrillas have had their brief hour of havoc, the results are helpful to the stable houses which remain.

If you can reach an understanding with your competitors as to prices, territory, etc., much comfort will be gained.

There are some men, however, who cannot be reasoned with, and these should be allowed to have their uncombated say, as the quickest way to tire them out. Sometimes this policy is hard to pursue but it never fails to win. The writer once managed a business. One competitor was of the old, abusive order and thought that we ought to get off the earth. Our dignified silence gained the respect of the

trade, and all that was said against us quickly acted as a boomerang. Some one has said, "Silence is the first resort of wise men, and the last one of fools." In this case we did concede a little to the human instinct for revenge, but regretfully.

Make it a rule to say nothing against your competitor, and do not allow your men to speak ill of him or, indeed, to allude to him, if possible. The chances are that a really mean man can rarely keep in his meanness. His talk may do him a little good for a time in individual cases where you are not known, but if you say nothing derogatory your fairness and decency will gain respect.

Trade clubs, merchants' associations and business conventions are all helpful in drawing competitors together. If you are new to a town make it a point to early meet your competitors. Let them know that you do not wear hoofs or horns. It is not necessary to be effusively "a good fellow," but you can show the disposition to work in harmony with them. You will have many chances to favor your competitors. Look for these chances, as much for your own satisfaction as from better motives.

Any man who has been on the road as a salesman knows what it is to be pumped by a dealer wishing to learn what a rival is doing. Sometimes such travelers have themselves brought about a better understanding between dealers by tactfully repeating some pleasant words said by one about the other. Tale-bearers usually carry only the mean remarks and in cases of the opposite kind the report was as grateful as unexpected.

A young man once left a firm where he had been long employed, to start for himself in the same city. The old house was not broad or wise enough to accept the situation, but fought him with tongue and prices. Their action brought him sympathy and trade, as it always does, especially when the "under fellow" is of the right mettle. When asked what he had to say about his old employers he replied, "Nothing; they do talking enough for us both. I worked for them faithfully for years and they paid me well and treated me nicely. Since I left them I hear they sing a different song, but they are not hurting us. They have succeeded in advertising us well, and, no doubt, have done us some good. None of them speak to me now, but I shall live, no

doubt, and there may come a time when they will stop their foolishness and we can both improve our conditions."

Such a reply was creditable to the young man's head and heart.

CHAPTER XI.

KICKERS AND HOW TO CURE THEM.

Kickers are a sort of necessary evil and at times become a positive good to the dealer who is looking toward improving his business methods. They knock the conceit out of the merchant who frequently needs the experience.

They have to be endured, sometimes can be cured, and at all times furnish that healthy spice to business. The writer recalls one who kept up continuous performances, partly because he was built that way, being a dyspeptic from birth. A charge was once added to an invoice for cash paid out for ice on some perishable goods; such expenses were left to the discretion of the writer, dependent upon the weather. It was hot in Chicago when the cars left, and cool when they reached St. Louis, so that a draft drawn against the property on the St. Louis man was paid less this charge.

Months passed during which other transactions occurred, but the disputed claim remained unpaid. Finally the writer wrote a special letter which he thought was sufficiently clear and courteous enough to bring a settlement. These were the days when the two cities were strong business rivals. The letter came back with a scrawl under it, reading in blue pencil, "Go to H—— and don't forget I told you to." This, for a time, was irritating until it was returned with a red pencil sub-postscript, "Much obliged for your polite invitation to visit St. Louis, but cannot leave at present." The next mail brought a check for half the amount.

There are several classes of kickers; among them are those who kick because they are ignorant of the goods, the man who has an honest grievance, the thoroughly dishonest man and the one who finds he can buy cheaper. The man ignorant about paper will soon get his freshness rubbed off and join one of the other classes, or perhaps he may come out from the kickers and join a class who never kick. This is a small class and are usually those who stick pretty close to one jobbing house for each kind of goods they buy. The honest one who kicks only because he has a "kick coming"

sometimes does it in a way to make the dealer have more faith in him than ever before.

Since most of this book has reference to dealers covering a rather small territory the dishonest kicker who works for gain can not get much advantage over the paper man.

A grievance should be quickly investigated and if the goods were shipped direct from the mill and prove clearly to be defective, no haggling should ensue, but a settlement then and there arranged. A disposition to promptly correct error and the time cheerfully given to the investigation of grievances will always redound to your advantage.

CHAPTER XII.

LETTER WRITING A PROFITABLE PRIVILEGE.

Letter writing, as a means of profitably advertising a merchant, is seldom appreciated to its full extent.

It is often called an art. In business it is an opportunity, a privilege and if looked upon in this light the dealer will soon take a pleasure in seeing how the typewriter daily serves to build up his custom and credit. If a man only realized that the best letters are the simplest, how easy the art, he would seize every good chance to briefly get himself before both buyers and customers. Practice alone will tone down a redundancy of words, permissible when spoken, but hurtful in letter writing.

A paper man should use the best of stationery for most of his correspondence. Adopt some distinctive style or color of paper, and stick to it. A light tint of blue or something still more in variance with the ordinary kind

will emphasize your name. Envelopes to match the shade are desirable. Experience proves that a long number nine envelope has more effect on the average mind than the usual six and a half size. It looks official to recipients of little mail, and it is more easily opened and read by the big fellow. It costs a trifle more and creates an idea of prosperity which may be helpful to the new jobber.

Some will say that these are small points and may consider the larger envelope a needless expense, but all the same, the writer is satisfied that investigation will sustain the opinion expressed.

If you are not catering to the printers' trade, a lithographed letter-head will be found not only the handsomest, but really the cheapest. For town correspondence or brief notes to mill men after you are well known, half sheets of cheaper stock can be used.

Make sure that your trade-mark or firm name line is repeated on everything, order blanks, delivery tickets, envelopes, price lists, cards, etc.

You can adopt this firm name line from your letter-heads if desired, suggesting a style to the lithographer. Zinc etchings can be

cheaply made similar to the lithographed name, for use on the other stationery and newspaper advertising. All this is the best kind of advertising, since most people are too busy to more than glance at printed matter. A trademark or special lettering for your name, finally becomes impressed upon them, which is really all you want. Your name, town and that you deal in paper are facts that you cannot too often burn into the memory of the people.

Do all your own letter writing if possible, except those connected with the routine of the credit department. Establish a system and don't deviate from it, even if it occasionally involves night work. A little planning will arrange so that most letters can leave on first mail from your town. Get the habit of answering all important letters early in the day before there are many interruptions of your time.

All letters enclosing money require an answer. Of course a receipt is frequently all that is needed, yet here is a chance to show a friendly interest, and over your own signature. Ask about condition of trade or crops in the writer's section or tell him about some bar-

gains you have. Practice in this line will give you a chance to write a letter in most cases. The same idea can be used in the acknowledgment of an order. Inquiries about the price of stock of course require prompt reply. If a letter comes into your office which will take you several days to hunt up the desired information, write at once and say so. Postage stamps are not luxuries and the chances are that you will make and keep several good friends for every postage stamp you lose.

Sometimes letter writing is described as merely talking on paper, but this is not true.

You can call a man a liar in conversation with a good natured laugh, but it is an altogether different thing when you put that word in a letter. Always read over a letter carefully and try to see yourself in the place of the man who will receive it.

If you are angry at a man, relieve your feelings by writing him, but hold this kind of letter until the next day and then re-read it again after a good night's sleep.

Promptness in replying to letters and clearness of expression, coupled occasionally with a few words about business being good with you

will do much towards putting you in good standing with the manufacturer. Such letters will need time to compose as they should be terse, forceful and hopeful in tone. Letters to your customers can be a bit gossipy and contain references to the man's family, horse or chickens.

Open your own mail. Start out with a determination to handle a few important things yourself and be slow to delegate authority to subordinates.

One of your best assets is this privilege of letter writing. Enlarge its scope and you are apt to coin more dollars.

CHAPTER XIII.

VALUE OF TWO PER CENT. PAY AS YOU GO.

If you once appreciate the value of taking every two per cent discount you will soon also be able to pay as you go, and thus enjoy the supreme satisfaction of owing no man anything but good will.

In starting business with ready cash in hand, you will make sure of this discount. Later, when your capital is all invested in stock or accounts it will need much thought and work to get in the funds, but it can be done, if you are a man of industry and force.

Resolve that you must have the advantage of this two per cent and you will get it. The two per cent not only means two per cent off the bill but it means a smaller bill. It also means teaching one the value of keeping nothing but good accounts on his books, and lastly, it means teaching one the value of interest.

Interest is something which works while you sleep, and while you rest Sundays. If you are paying money to your bank for interest and trusting your stock out you will be very apt, under this silent teacher, to make the other fellow pay interest also.

If you have the laudable ambition to be known as a cash buyer of paper and to have the added comfort of knowing that you eat nothing, drink nothing, wear nothing that is not paid for before it goes to your home, you will surely learn to let no discount escape you, for you will always have in hand the price that takes the discount and makes you and yours happier and better. Like Whittier's Village Blacksmith, you can look every man in the face. This kind of contentment is better than riches and is a spirit of independence far too rare among Americans.

If you can arrange with your bank to take all the notes which you have to accept it would be well. If you must owe, better borrow of your bank and show a bold front to the mill men. No one but your banker need know how you stand financially.

It will not take long for you to get known as a cash buyer. The salesmen on the road will

be sure to see you. Mill men and big jobbers will keep in touch with you and bargains will be constantly offered.

To neglect to take the two per cent is frequently a mark of slack methods and weak business ability.

CHAPTER XIV.

GETTING IN A RUT.

The worse feature about the man who has fallen into a rut is that he doesn't know it.

All of us have a streak of indolence in our make-up and if the merchant has an income independent of his daily business, laziness is almost sure to increase and nothing but failure, or the strong words of some real friend is ever likely to shake him out of the rut of self-satisfied laziness into the road which leads to success, provided there is sufficient motive power in the man himself to enable him to climb the hill.

The man in a rut advertises spasmodically, if at all. When business is good he thinks he don't need it and when trade is dull he says he can't afford to. Gladstone never got in a rut even when he had passed into the eighties. He possessed the keenest vision of men and events, causes and effects. Not long before

he died he said, "Nothing but the mint can make money without advertising." Bradstreet tells us that exactly 84 per cent of the merchants who failed last year did not advertise in the newspapers. The rest probably used the wrong mediums.

One of the ruts into which men fall, who do not read trade papers, advertising literature or study the signs of the times, is a failure to understand what might be called economical extravagance. The live business man daily practices it. In a store, for instance, there is the appearance of extravagance in the use of fine paper and twine which give the bundles an appearance of elegance which evidently draws trade. The day has long since passed when people will go to a slip-shod, shabby store to buy goods, thinking that they can buy them cheaper than in an elegant, modern, up-to-date one, and the sooner the old foggy, stingy merchants find that out, the better it will be for them.

Because many tight fisted men are prosperous the mental argument of the "rutters," who do not read nor widely observe, men who only think that think, often leads to foolish economies and the loss of great business pos-

sibilities. These wealthy samples of meanness are oftentimes penurious because of early circumstances and are close from the force of habit. Sometimes they try to fight against their chief fault. Penuriousness has become second nature and that nature asserts itself in every act and expenditure.

As is well known, habit forges its chains more tightly around a man as the years creep on. The young men can scarcely understand how habit becomes more powerful even than principle. It is the older men who ought to brush up more against their fellows, travel among those in the same business, visit the mills East and West, read inspiring business stories and keep the heart young and the mind active. Some of those who are in the ruts of custom and precedent, think that they cannot afford to travel and get away from ordinary business routine. If they but knew it they could better afford to mortgage the homestead than not to try a cure for this insidious disease of "in the rut." Ambition is being stifled while self-centered ignorance prevents them from getting the keenest enjoyment out of life.

The old or middle aged man, backed with his experience and filled with a zeal for a knowledge of new methods for time and brain saving, makes the ideal merchant.

These are the days when men must "do" more than merely "be." It behooves any man who has children or young employes to teach them the difference between true and false economy. To-day the liberal merchant, discreetly generous is the man who will gain solid success. Business prosperity appears to be founded on a mixture of rigid economy and liberal ideas. How to mix the ingredients needs careful consideration.

CHAPTER XV.

SELLING FOR CASH.

In the early stages of a new business the proprietor can afford to spend a little time explaining the advantages of buying for cash and as inducement he can allow three per cent off. Many country merchants who sell largely to farmers on time get out of the habit of taking discounts, thinking that they can't spare the money, but as your bills will not be large it may not be difficult to start the habit on their paper bills. During the past few years crops have been good and prices for farm products liberal and this has tended to shorter accounts at the stores. The necessity or rather the desirability of doing a paper business on as nearly a cash business as possible, and on thoroughly business principles, was never so fully realized as it is among the thinking paper men of to-day. The margins are not large and have been decreasing for several years.

The result of decreased margins will be that many of the paper sellers must either change their tactics or get out of trade. Larger sales on smaller profits is the tendency in every line. Impress upon your customers the fact that you cannot profitably do a money lending business and the reasonable merchant will quickly appreciate the point. There is a large class of men whom you cannot afford to credit long on in large amounts. They abound in every community. They are good natured, honest men, but lack the ability to lessen the credit lines to their patrons. Their long acquaintance with everybody keeps them chronically poor. Many of them fall down on the ancient fallacy that they must do much of the work in their store with their own hands. They work hard but not wisely and frequently overbuy just because they are offered long time without paying any apparent interest. The interest is there, all the same, and your close figures can be explained to them on the theory that your business is practically a cash one both in buying and selling. The peculiar thing about these men is that they make the same mistakes year after year as long as they can get any one to trust them.

Your competitor can easily sell such men, but it need make no difference to you what others do, the thing for you, or any other progressive jobber to do, is to have short accounts on your books. Put these amounts into a note if not paid promptly and if they let their notes go to protest you can politely decline to sell them again except for cash. Keep your temper and keep your stock rather than run long accounts with any but the most substantial trade. The latter, you will find, are usually wise enough under most conditions to take all the discounts you offer.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOSING YOUR GRIP.

Under the most favorable circumstances and after the most watchful buying, selling and

Sickness, death, loss of valued employees, credit methods, there will come times when things all seem to go wrong.

cut-throat competition. Crop failures, falling prices with large stocks on hand and other unforeseen troubles usually come in cycles and all at once. If you have been reasonably successful you will be surprised how jealousy will crop up even among supposed friends and even relatives. About this time you find yourself growing pessimistic and ready to tell your troubles to others. Right here check yourself, for this is the start towards losing your grip. Brace up. If you have been a little careless in dress, change for the better at once. Recently a large merchant failed, and in talking about it with a mutual friend he said that

he saw it coming. "Did you not notice," said the latter, "that Jones lately went about with unblackened shoes and unshaven face, where before he took extreme pride in his personal appearance?"

A wealthy man was asked the secret of his prosperity. "When I was poor I talked as if I were rich, and when I became rich I talked as if I were poor." The man of real strength of character is not disconcerted by trivial disappointments, nor dismayed by greater ones. The self-reliant man is nerved by difficulties and obstacles to greater effort. Having health, character and energy, no man need lose his grip, be circumstances ever so unfavorable. The writer knew a man trained as a book-keeper who lost his position and, having no financial resources or training in other work, became disheartened over his failure to obtain employment. He was fast losing his grip when a neighbor accidentally learning the state of affairs, sought him out and offered him the gratuitous use of a horse and wagon and an endorsement at a paper house for a small quantity of wrapping paper. The young man was absolutely a novice in the business, but he persevered through two weeks of solicit-

ing without an order. The third week brought a little success, and within two months he had built up a trade which yielded him an income much beyond the one he had earned as a book-keeper. He is still in the same business, and the years have come and gone, adding to his prosperity until to-day he is the head of quite an establishment, all obtained without a dollar of capital.

In telling the writer his story he said that the open-air experience brought him a cheerfulness which served as capital and from the moment he took the reins on the old wagon he knew that he could and would build up a business.

This case was in Chicago, and his territory was one in which competition was especially keen.

There is such a thing as minimizing difficulties. The world has little use for the weak-kneed, the faint-hearted, but the conqueror who carries victory in his very presence, who overcomes opposition which appals weak minds, who does not skip his difficult problems, who conquers everything which gets in his way, is always in demand. People who accomplish little of real moment have often a

positive genius for seeing difficulties in the way of everything they undertake. There is always an "if," a "but," or a "can't" in the road. Obstacles are like wild animals. They are cowards, but they will bluff you if they can. If they see you are afraid of them; if you stand and hesitate, if you take your eye from theirs, they are liable to spring upon you; but if you do not flinch, if you look them squarely in the eye, they will slink out of sight. So difficulties flee before absolute fearlessness; they are very real and formidable to the timid, and grow larger with vacillating contemplation. If we but knew it, our own selfishness, our desire for comfort, for pleasure, is the greatest obstacle existent.

If you see any signs that you are losing your grip, take a bath, a good night's sleep, read some inspiring story about some one who has succeeded, and then pitch into the first bit of work that comes to hand. It matters little what it is. If times are dull, get out after the customers, and your new earnestness will compel sales. No healthy, sane man in America need ever lose his grip.

CHAPTER XVII.

SPREADING OUT.

Many a man has not sense enough to really profit by his past experience. Still a larger number cannot benefit by the mistakes of others. Those few who can apply such lessons as a guide for their own life are the successful men in the trade.

The writer knew a prosperous house in a large city who felt justified in taking larger quarters. The store they selected was very well located, roomy and especially adapted to their growing business. They only needed the first floor and basement, but could not secure the coveted place without leasing the entire three-story building. They found a firm also looking for more room, and by renting them the two upper stories secured for themselves the desired first-floor quarters. The sub-tenants were well rated financially and apparently making money. Within three months

after both firms had settled in their new location, the sub-tenants failed. For two years the upper stories remained vacant, entailing a dead loss of \$3,000 upon the firm who had signed the lease for the entire building. It was a case of regretted spreading out and is but the history of many another concern.

Memory recalls the experience of two old friends who established themselves in a modest manufacturing business in Chicago. Securing some large contracts, they rapidly made money and steadily increased their plant, still prospering in spite of fires and labor strikes. After a few years they accepted an offer from an estate to build them a specially designed building three times the size of their existing factory, and moved into it after signing a long lease which called for a small fortune in yearly payments. After that it was a strenuous financial tussle. They worked like slaves from 7 a. m. till 7 p. m., neglecting all in order to swing a business commensurate with their expenses. From jovial, companionable fellows they grew into chronic dyspeptics, grasping in disposition, and with pessimistic views of all in heaven and earth. Both have now withdrawn from business. Perhaps they may

have secured some dollars as a result of their labors, but, as the writer occasionally sees them, it is evident that they did not secure what Solomon of old said was great riches—contentment.

No one who reads these lines can fail to recall numerous instances in the paper trade. Perhaps a majority of the failures which have occurred during the past twenty years among paper men can be traced to this cause.

Business life is made up of years of prosperity and periods of hard times, and men are sure to forget during the years of plenty that times were ever different, or that leanness is bound to come again. This country has not had a panic for many years and some optimists argue that changed conditions will serve to prevent any real hard times from ever again striking us. Let it be hoped that this is a true prophecy. Its chief weakness is that wealth begets over-confidence, high living and carelessness in business methods.

A jobber often thinks that he can safely and rapidly increase his business by using a little spare capital that he has been able to accumulate, but he forgets that times are ever changing and the day may come when that ready

money may be the saving of the business he now considers so secure. He underestimates too, the fact that he will be loading himself up with new cares likely to shorten his days and make life less worth living.

There is a danger line just beyond the words progress and enterprise, which the man of sound judgment can well keep in mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXECUTIVE ABILITY.

Looking backward and trying to sum up the reasons why some men make such a signal success of their affairs, the writer is convinced that it is the merchant of general all around business ability who is the winner, rather than the specialist.

This applies only to the proprietor or manager. A good employe may well be a specialist and for this he can draw big money. In the professions everything runs to specialization. The general practitioner and all around lawyer is slowly disappearing for the reason that the field has become so broad that it is beyond the mental power of one man to cover it thoroughly. The ability of the specialist may bring him a partnership in time, but he still sticks reasonably close to his specialty.

Now the owner of the business is an entirely different proposition. If he lack executive ability and cannot sift affairs so as to determine what most needs his time and energy, then will the whole business suffer.

Take the matter of system. Suppose he has an office man who is really a "system crank," wasting time and money on devices and methods utterly unneeded in a small business, his good business sense will decide that too much method is as dangerous as too little. To see an evil, with a man of executive talent is to kill it. To know men is about as important as to know goods, hence the executive can soon estimate the value of all his employees and balance their good points against their weaknesses.

There is the advertising account, be it little or small, it may prove only a waste of money or it may result in actually hurting the business if the advertising is not worded right or placed unwisely. An expert advertising man may write so as to draw trade, but it may be that in the enthusiasm for his task he may so word his ads. as to make it difficult to hold that trade.

The ability to separate the chaff from the

wheat, to eliminate the consideration of trifles and to grasp the condition of the whole business and its relation to future possibilities, is the mark of a man of executive talent. Such a proprietor can see that the salesmen are in accord with the policy and principles of the house. He can tell employes, should they need such advice, that sharp practice never pays. Some men think it an evidence of cleverness and gleefully tell of their success in over-reaching others. We laugh at the stories, for our sense of humor is stronger than our sense of right, but we are inclined to be suspicious of those men afterward. Confidence is business capital, but is a kind of capital easily impaired by just such stories as mentioned.

Years ago if a boy wanted to be a plumber, or a carpenter, he had to serve long years of unnecessary apprenticeship, but to-day correspondence and technical training schools give him better knowledge in a fraction of the time. The business men of the country are too apt to think that long years of training are absolutely essential before a man is fit to run a business of his own. When they do start, they are apt to be specialists in a sort of fashion, rather than men who have studied the causes of

other men's failures or who have kept in touch with advanced methods of general business. A man who has been at the head of a grocery or drug house, or run a factory where his executive ability has been tested, can frequently start a paper business and after a brief experience conduct it better than a man whose knowledge of paper was confined to the office or salesroom for long years. Adaptability to circumstances and a clear head will go far to offset the lack of training in a paper warehouse. Of course, many a man who starts in business for himself thinks that he has had a broad experience in all parts of his chosen trade. He should well consider whether they have the gift of management. If he is honest with himself and knows his limitations he had better be associated with a partner and devote his energies to the part which his taste dictates.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN AIM IN LIFE.

The unsystematic man is always aimless.

That is, he has no fixed, definite aim in life. Of course he thinks he has and spasmodically he aims at something, and if he don't hit it, it don't much matter. It is fate, fortune or luck against him.

When I was a boy my grandfather gave me a shotgun. I started out hunting blackbirds and spent two days wasting powder but brought down no game. My grandfather asked me how I was getting on, and I was obliged to confess that I had not hit anything. "How do you aim?" said he. "O, I see a flock of blackbirds and fire at 'em. There are so many of them I wonder I don't get some."

"Boy," said the old gentleman, "fix your eye on one blackbird at a time." I remember the advice as applicable to lots of other things besides blackbirds.

The paper man may have experience, zeal and ambition, but he will never accomplish anything worth while unless he starts out with a positive aim and makes his whole life work shape toward it.

Sir Thomas Lipton, a stowaway cabin boy not many decades ago, to-day a peer of Great Britain and loved in two hemispheres, is a living example of having a steadfast aim. This aim was to be a great grocer and to place his name in every part of the globe. He shot long and hard but his arrows touched the bulls eye. He has had lots of free advertising and unneeded help since he grew famous, but as boy and young man there was nothing back of him, but a stout heart and this singleness of aim. He revolutionized the retail grocery business of conservative old England as John Wanamaker and Marshall Field have revolutionized the retail dry goods business in America.

In planning the future and studying existing conditions, as men with a real aim always do, he laid down three sound business principles and worked out his success on those lines. They were the immense superiority of a cash over a credit trade, the necessity of

reducing middle men to a minimum and the indispensableness of advertising. His business maxim is, "One thing at a time," which is practically the same thing in other words as the title of this chapter. Lipton's enterprises now employ nearly 35,000 men, the greatest pay roll in existence. Lipton deserves to be known more for the work of commercial education he has done than for the money he has made, or for the international sport he has popularized.

We all know the fellow who drifts with the tide. He has no rule for buying and has no particular system for doing business. He generally carries a large stock, surely so if his business is good. If business continues good he succeeds, but when it is bad he is one of the first to go under unless he has had a long season of successful trade and big profits.

One of the very best aims a paper jobber can have is an aim to reach a point in his affairs when he can discount all his bills. He will take lots of comfort in planning for it. It is not only the two per cent which he saves but the fact that he pays cash gives him a chance to secure many a good bargain. Most men desire to buy for cash, but this is very

different than making it a positive aim and determination to "get there." The earnest man who has this for his object will know exactly how much he is making each month. He will calculate ahead when it comes to buying and figure closely to have enough stock to supply his trade and yet have no heavy overstock. In short, he will work and plan with the supreme aim in view of becoming a cash buyer. This is a more laudable aim than merely to set out to become rich. Steadfastness is better than genius, for it is a quality that always gives one a keen sense of comfort as a result of doing well his duty. No man can be steadfast unless he have a clearly defined aim and abundant will power.

CHAPTER XX.

STRICTLY PRIVATE.

There are several minor things which often militate against a man's business success. It frequently happens that an employe who has been mindful of a good personal appearance becomes lax in this matter and even slouchy in dress after he is a proprietor. There are some plausible reasons for this undesirable change of habit, but the fact remains that no man with any proper self respect will long be guilty of such carelessness when he once realizes the situation. He can't afford to be slovenly from a business standpoint and especially because of the demoralizing effect upon himself. An observing student of mankind once remarked that the lack of a necktie was an index of a man's lack of some necessary business quality, and to beware of the man who habitually went collarless. The difference between extreme conventionality and a

boorish neglect of the decencies of civilized living is a wide one.

Shakespeare talks about the wisdom of dressing well and Carlyle's work on clothes contains more practical logic than can be summed up in tons of advice. That every business man should dress as well as his purse will permit is a platitude. The trouble is that many merchants don't know just what their purses will permit, as they are frequently in debt. Within certain limits a man should dress well even when in debt, as a means to more quickly get out of it. As the world goes, the prosperous man is the one who always get the plums. Nothing succeeds like success. To him that hath shall be given. These old sayings are to-day more true than ever. If a man carries about with him any of the evidences of need or poverty it is generally attributed to his own deficiencies, unjust as may often be that conclusion.

To be well dressed is always good advertising. Prosperous business men will associate themselves with those only who dress neatly, are clean of person, habits and conversation, because these are the outward evidences of a good moral character.

If one is poorly dressed he feels at odds with the world, that good fortune is not playing into his hands, that he cannot feel on the same level with other men so that he may look them squarely in the face as their equal.

There is a sense of inferiority which makes him feel that he is at a disadvantage; there is a feeling of degradation which pulls him down to his depressed estimate of himself and in turn these impressions are communicated to those with whom he meets and they gauge him no higher than he esteems himself. They rightly, perhaps, accept him at his own estimate. Buyers often judge the quality of a salesman's goods by his poorest sample. It is only human nature to consider that a man is no better than he himself grades his personality. Let the long-haired men of genius, the visionary inventors, dress and look as they will, no sane business man in this twentieth century can afford for a little minute to be indifferent to personal appearance. You should always look as if you and the world were on pretty fair terms.

The owner must needs choose for himself the work that will most count in results. Rus-

kin tells us that there are three tests of wise work: "It must be honest, useful, cheerful."

It is wise to be honest, for that is a necessity.

It is wise to be useful, for that is your aim in business.

It is wise to be cheerful, for that is a friend-maker and likewise conduces to your immediate comfort. A wonderful gift is poise—the ability to remain calm, to keep your head in an emergency. It is a gift, yet a working amount of it can be cultivated by the careful proprietor. To have this quality is a proof of leadership. To keep a steady grip upon the key of the situation, to guide all aright, to check all confusion; when you can do this you are nearing the goal of business victory. The man who becomes rattled will throw into stampede the best regulated business in the world. There can be no real accomplishment without a certain calm regularity of method and management. If you are restless and fitful by nature set yourself seriously to the task of acquiring poise. The giving of more of your time to the right kind of reading will prove an excellent aid to improvement of any inherent disposition to nervousness.

Do not forget that your clerks are watching you just as carefully as you are watching them. If you are careless or negligent in any way, your example will go a great way toward making them the same. If they see that you are discourteous to customers they will follow suit. If you are in the habit of observing irregular hours in your work in the store, they will avail themselves of the same privilege. If you violate any principles of business ethics they will soon do likewise. Of course all of this is wrong on their part, but it is human nature, and you will find it easier to reform your habits than to reform theirs first. If you are careful, courteous and punctual, your employes will be influenced by it far more than you may imagine.

CHAPTER XXI.

PATIENCE, PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY.

Patience is a virtue not easily cultivated in these strenuous days of business competition. In the abstract we subscribe to the proverb: "All things come to him who waits."

The combination of industry with patient waiting is indicative of that poise of mind usually found in the really great men of the earth. The man who calmly pins his faith in an Almighty power, has confidence in himself and persistently works toward a definite end, never fails in the real meaning of that over-worked word. Trials and adversities will surely come, but the man of patience, poise and persistence uses them as strengtheners for other battles and a needed upbuilding of character. A good character cannot be permanently destroyed; it is capital of a kind which draws interest and pays dividends regardless of all calamities.

Progress in business will come to any man who will pay the price. It means to put his whole heart and soul into his work. It is not the giving of one's sole time to hard labor, either of hand or brain. You should have a room at home where you can have privacy to conscientiously indulge in a little self-study. This must be real and thorough, and time should be set aside for it with a will power that is immovable. Self-study has for many a man forestalled certain failure and put him on the road to success. Stop, look and listen to the workings of your own human engine. Take stock of your mental advantages and weaknesses, then apply all your will-power to strengthen the weak and suppress the strong. Add to this, good stimulating reading about successful business men and methods. Do both these things in addition to your duties at store and office, and then progress will have already begun within you, the man.

Prosperity, what is it? It surely is not represented by dollars alone. To some men prosperity means commanding social or business standing.

Ideals are slowly changing. The man who has secured an income sufficient to support

his family and knows that it cannot be lost by change of circumstances, who owes no man anything and is at peace with God and man, surely he has attained prosperity.

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